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No. 90

DIVIDED IRELAND
The Heritage of Ancient Hatreds

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Consultants D.K. Fieldhouse, Lecturer in Commonwealth History and Fellow of Nuffield College, Oxford
A.F. Madden, Reader in Commonwealth Government and Fellow of Nuffield College, Oxford

D.G. BOYCE, who wrote the main text of this issue, was born in County Armagh, Northern Ireland, and received his doctorate in modern history from Queen's University, Belfast. He is currently lecturing in politics at University College, Swansea. He has written articles on Anglo-Irish relations and his book, *Englishmen and Irish Troubles*, was published in 1972. His main hobby is the study of military history.

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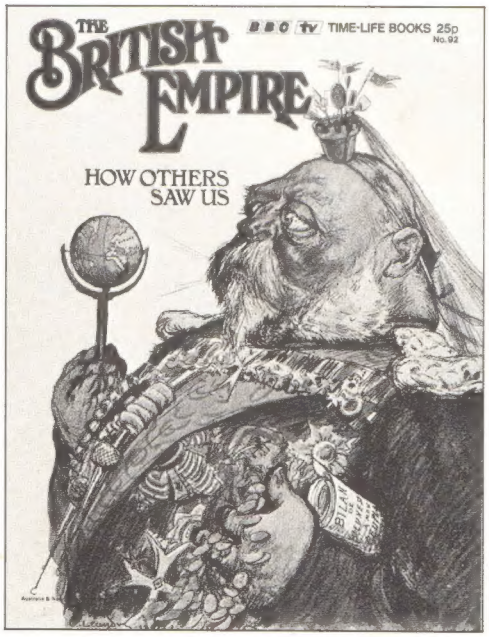

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Cover: This Belfast wall-painting of a republican tricolour surmounted by a reminder of the 1798 rising against British rule, serves as fuel in Ulster's bitter and continuing internal conflict.

DIVIDED IRELAND

In 1921 Ireland began a new chapter in her violent and agonized history. An attempt was made to satisfy Catholic nationalists and Protestant loyalists by dividing the country between them: the 26 predominantly Catholic counties of the south acquired Dominion status as the Irish Free State; the six mainly Protestant northern counties were allowed to retain their link with the United Kingdom. The settlement, wrote King George V, "means peace in Ireland." In fact, it was merely the prelude to renewed conflict. In the south, the Irish Republican Army pledged itself to liberate that part of Ireland remaining under British control and in the north a large Catholic minority was unable to reconcile itself to Protestant domination. Fifty years later the bombs, the bullets – and the blood – were still scarring Northern Ireland.

By D.G. Boyce

In 1800 the Irish parliament at Dublin voted itself out of existence and Ireland became an integral part of the United Kingdom. The union was dissolved, amidst chaos and terror, in 1921, and it is the turbulent legacy of those days with which the British government is still struggling more than half a century later. The act of union did little to mitigate the grievances of the Catholic peasantry in the south, and from the late 19th Century it was challenged by a strong, well-organized Irish nationalist movement. The struggle for self-rule seemed to have reaped its reward in 1914, when the Liberal government's Bill to grant Ireland home rule – limited self-government within the United Kingdom – received the royal assent. The measure was postponed, however, until after the conclusion of the First World War, and by that time the basis of consent for such a moderate measure had been destroyed. During the war the Sinn Fein ("Ourselves Alone") Party, formed in 1905 under the leadership of Arthur Griffith, had made rapid progress in converting Irishmen to the nationalist cause. The forlorn but heroic republican rising in Dublin on Easter Monday, 1916, and the subsequent execution of 15 of its leaders inflamed Irish opinion even more strongly against any continuation of the connection with Britain. At the election of 1918 Sinn Fein swept the old Home Rule party into oblivion and for the first time the British government was faced with a mass movement demanding immediate and sovereign independence for the whole of Ireland.

Unwilling to take their seats in a "foreign" parliament at Westminster, the Sinn Fein members elected in 1918 stayed at home and established a separate Irish parliament of their own at the Mansion House in Dublin. The 1916 declaration of an independent Irish republic was renewed and Eamon de Valera, a commander in the Easter Rising, was elected its president. In January, 1919, the Irish Volunteer Force or Irish Republican Army as the Volunteers now came to be called, launched a guerrilla war against the Royal Irish Constabulary. As counter-terror piled upon terror, the British Prime Minister, David Lloyd George, sought for a solution that would somehow satisfy not only those Irishmen, mainly in the south, who wished to sever the British connection, but also those Irishmen, mainly in the north, who wished to retain it. Before the First World War, northern Protestants under the leadership of Sir Edward Carson had declared themselves willing to resist Home Rule by force of arms if necessary and they were certainly not more inclined to accept their inclusion in a completely independent Irish republic with a Catholic majority.

Nursing the traditional suspicion that all Roman Catholics were "rebels," Carson's supporters went on the rampage in Belfast, Londonderry and other northern towns in the summer of 1920, providing a grim and bloody portent of events half a century later.

"There can be no doubt," wrote Hugh Martin, who observed these events as correspondent for the London *Daily News*, "that it was a deliberate and organized attempt, not by any means the first in history, to drive the Catholic Irish out of North-East Ulster, and the machinery that was being used was very largely the machinery of the Carsonite army of 1914." Despite the violence raging in Belfast, beleaguered Catholics from other towns continued to pour in. "Since the early days of the invasion of Belgium, when I witnessed the civil evacuation of Alost and the flights from Ostend," wrote Martin, "I had seen nothing more pathetic than the Irish migration."

Anxious to appease Catholic nationalists and Protestant Unionists, Lloyd George came up with a plan that satisfied neither. The Government of Ireland Act, which received the royal assent just before Christmas, 1920, provided for two Irish parliaments: one at Dublin for the 26 predominantly Catholic counties of the south and one at Belfast for the six Protestant-dominated counties of the north. Each was to exercise strictly limited sovereignty under the supreme authority of the imperial parliament. Such was the origin of partition, though the principle of unity was to be maintained through a Council of Ireland composed of delegates from each of the two legislatures "with a view to the eventual establishment of a parliament for the whole of Ireland." Unionists disliked the plan because it meant abandoning to the southern parliament three of the nine counties that made up the historic province of Ulster. But if the three had been retained a further 260,000 Roman Catholics would have come under Belfast's jurisdiction. Reluctantly, the Unionists decided therefore to acquiesce in the proposed partition, which gave them control of Antrim, Armagh, Down, Fermanagh, Londonderry and Tyrone. The scheme, however, fell far short of republican aspirations in the south and the Dublin parliament elected under the new arrangement in May, 1921, was boycotted by its Sinn Fein members.

As terrorism and reprisal in the south continued to mount, Lloyd George came under increasing pressure to end the bloody deadlock. Distressed at the suffering of so many of his Irish subjects and concerned at its effect on opinion in the rest of the Empire, King George V pressed his government to adopt a more conciliatory approach. In May, 1920, his private secretary, Lord Stamfordham, addressed an eloquent plea to the Chief Secretary for Ireland, Sir Hamar Greenwood. "The King," wrote Stamfordham, "does ask himself, and he asks you, if this policy of reprisals is to be continued and, if so, to where will it lead Ireland and us all? It seems to His Majesty that in punishing the guilty we are inflicting punishment no less severe upon the innocent." At the end of June the British government invited de Valera and Sir James Craig (later Lord Craigavon), the northern Premier, to come to London for talks and on July 11 a truce was proclaimed in Ireland. Five months of anxious negotiation, in which General Smuts, the South African Prime Minister, played a short but useful role, now began. Lloyd George was prepared to offer Dominion status for all Ireland, with the north retaining its local government autonomy but ruled from a parliament in Dublin. Craig refused and the six counties were excluded from the offer, though an effort was made to tempt southern delegates with the possibility of eventual Irish reunification through a commission to redraw boundaries between the two halves of the country. Acceptance would mean aban-

doning, at least temporarily, the cherished ideal of an independent republic of all Ireland. Rejection, declared Lloyd George, would result in "immediate and terrible war." The offer was accepted.

Under the terms of the agreement signed in London at 2.15 a.m. on December 6, 1921, the Irish Free State was made a self-governing Dominion of the British Empire, with the same constitutional status as Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa. The armed forces of the new state were not to be greater proportionately than those of the United Kingdom and Britain was to retain certain naval and military facilities. The agreement related to the whole of Ireland, but for a month after the ratification by the Westminster Parliament it was not to apply to the north and within that time the province might opt out of the Free State if it so desired. It did, of course, so desire. Only one more hurdle remained: the republican parliament (Dáil Éireann) which continued to sit in Dublin and regarded itself as the legitimate guardian of Ireland's national destiny. The Dáil began its debate on the treaty on December 14. De Valera, who had shrewdly chosen not to attend the final negotiations in London, led the attack on the treaty "because it will not end the centuries of conflict between the two nations of Great Britain and Ireland." With equal passion Gavan Duffy, one of the treaty signatories, recalled the ultimatum they had been given by Lloyd George. "We lost the Republic of Ireland," said Duffy, "in order to save the people of Ireland." On January 7, 1922, the Dáil approved the treaty by 64 votes to 57 and a week later a provisional government of the Irish Free State was formed under the leadership of Michael Collins, the man who for three years had organized the

Women protest in Dublin in 1923 against the Free State's execution without trial of 77 political prisoners as a reprisal for republican outrages.

guerrilla war against the British forces.

January, 1922, then, marked the end of one chapter in Ireland's unhappy history and the beginning of another. Total integration with Great Britain had failed to bring political stability to Ireland. It remained to be seen whether partition and self-government for the 26 southern counties would finally achieve it. Some British statesmen professed to hope that it would. With exuberant optimism, Lloyd George informed the British House of Commons that, "No agreement ever arrived at between two peoples has been received with so enthusiastic and so universal a welcome." Winston Churchill, the Colonial Secretary, expressing himself rather more cautiously, looked forward to a "union of hearts between the people of Great Britain and of Ireland." Neither had much cause for cheerful predictions. The greatest and most obvious danger to the permanence of the settlement was that the division of Ireland into north and south might prove unworkable.

The second danger was that Dominion status was bound not to satisfy the powerful republican elements in the Irish Free State. Southern Ireland, moreover, had achieved this status by means very different from those of her sister states, Australia, Canada, New Zealand. Their path had been one of slow and peaceful constitutional development. The Irish Free State had come to birth, to use the words of the *Times* leader-writer, "as it were, in a night" – and as a result of British coercion. Loyalty to Crown and Empire could not be exacted at the point of a gun. The Irish leaders, Arthur Griffith and Michael Collins, had made a bold and brave decision in what they saw as the best interests of their country. But those who were prepared to accept nothing less than a 32-counties republic regarded the Free State leaders as little better than traitors. Cathal Brugha, who had been severely wounded in the Dublin fighting of 1916 and remained permanently lame as a result, echoed the sentiment of all embittered republicans in the wake of the settlement: "If instead of being so strong, our last cartridge had been spent and our last man was lying on the ground and his enemies howling round him and their bayonets raised, ready to plunge them into his body, that man should say – true to the traditions handed down – if they said to him: 'Now will you come into the Empire?' – he should say, and he would say: 'No I will not.' That is the spirit which has lasted all through the centuries, and you people in favour of the treaty know that the British government and the British Empire will have gone down before that spirit dies out in Ireland."

After ten years in the political wilderness, Eamon de Valera, leading critic of the Anglo-Irish Treaty, strides back to power in 1932 as head of the Free State government.

A few months after making this dramatic affirmation, Brugha was again in action in Dublin. This time, however, his foes were fellow Irishmen and he did not recover from the wounds they inflicted. In June, 1922, fighting had broken out between troops of the Irish Free State and the anti-treaty faction of the I.R.A. Pursued with ferocity on both sides, the war's casualties included Michael Collins himself, who was killed in a gun battle in his home county of Cork. By May, 1923, the Free State forces had achieved a military victory "by means far more drastic [according to the former British military commander in Ireland, General Sir Nevil Macready] than any which the British government dared to impose during the worst period of the Rebellion."

In August the Free State government, led now by William Cosgrave, sought for victory at the polls. Its candidates won 63 seats, the republican opposition 44. It was not the decisive mandate Cosgrave had wanted, but it was sufficient to give some hope that political stability was finally emerging in the south. In 1925 Cosgrave even felt strong enough to waive any modification of the border between the Free State and the north. The problem of the Free State's constitutional relationship with Britain, however, remained in the forefront and Cosgrave's government began almost immediately to pave the way to the ultimate goal of an Irish republic. In 1929 it refused to exclude disputes within the Commonwealth from the International Court of Justice and at the Imperial Conferences of 1926 and 1930 Irish pressure was crucial in achieving a redefinition of Dominion status. The 1931 Statute of Westminster

empowered any Dominion to repeal legislation of the British Parliament which had hitherto been binding in its territory, and the Free State became legally entitled to dismantle the 1921 Treaty.

Having acquired the right to dismantle the Treaty, Cosgrave was content to hold his hand. But at the election of 1932, de Valera's anti-treaty Fianna Fáil (Warriors of Destiny) Party won the largest share of seats in the new Dáil and with Labour Party support he was able to form a government. De Valera, who was to dominate Irish politics for the next 20 years, had been born in New York in 1882, the son of a Spanish father and Irish mother. On the death of his father in 1885 he was moved to Ireland and brought up by relatives among the Catholic peasantry of Limerick. His political interests were aroused in 1912, during the crisis over the Liberal government's Irish Home Rule Bill, and in 1913 he joined the Irish Volunteers, the republican military organization founded in that year in response to the Ulster Volunteers in the north. But his rise to prominence dated from 1916, when he took part in the Easter Rising. Captured by the British and sentenced to death, he was later reprieved and much of his subsequent prestige stemmed from his activity in the rebellion. In 1917 he was elected president of Sinn Fein and of the Irish Volunteers and, although he spent much of the period of the "troubles" of 1919–21 in America trying to raise political and financial support for the cause, he returned to cross swords with Lloyd George in July, 1921, during the preliminary negotiations for the Anglo-Irish Treaty.

It would be wrong to say that his opposition to the Treaty caused the civil war of 1922–23, but the fact that he lent his enormous prestige to the anti-Treaty I.R.A. undoubtedly helped its cause and retarded normal political development in Ireland. In August, 1923, he was arrested by the Free State authorities and spent the next 11 months in prison. The hatred nursed for de Valera by his enemies in the south was matched only by that of his enemies in the north. In 1932 the important question was how de Valera would behave now that he and his republican followers had won political power. There had been rumours that the Free State Army would refuse to serve under its old foes from the civil war, but these proved groundless and any expectations that de Valera would indulge in a "witch hunt" against his political opponents and hand over the country to gunmen were also quickly dispelled. After only a year in office, he held another general election at which Fianna Fáil won an over-all majority – the first time any party had achieved this since the founding of the state. De Valera had won power by peaceful and democratic means and he soon showed that he intended to brook no interference from men of violence, whoever they might be.

A threatened confrontation between the largely left-wing I.R.A. and the blueshirted, Fascist-style National Guard, led by the deposed Police Commissioner, General Eoin O'Duffy, claimed de Valera's attention early in 1933. A special squad of armed police, consisting of seasoned republicans, was formed to handle the Blueshirts and later in the year the movement was banned. De Valera dealt next with the I.R.A., which had announced that "while we have fists, hands and boots to use, and guns if necessary, we will not allow free speech to traitors." In 1936 the I.R.A. was declared an illegal body, its public assemblies were banned, and its Chief of Staff, Maurice Twomey, was sentenced to three years' hard labour, actions which did not destroy the organization but drove it underground. De Valera, however, could hardly suppress his former supporters without offering some tangible evidence of his continuing adherence to the cause of Irish republicanism. Between 1932 and 1939, therefore, the Anglo-Irish war was fought out again, only this time the weapons were propaganda and economic sanctions instead of bombs and bullets.

De Valera first set about dismantling those parts of the 1921 Treaty which he found objectionable. In 1932 he removed the Crown's representative, James McNeill, from the post of Governor-General, and appointed his own nominee. In 1933 he removed from the constitution the oath of allegiance to the Crown and abolished the right of appeal from Irish courts to the judicial committee of the Privy Council. In 1936 he removed the King and Governor-General from the constitution altogether. Finally, in 1937 he adopted a new constitution which provided for a president as head of state and changed the name of the country from the Irish Free State to Eire (Ireland).

A poster urges voters to support de Valera's chief opponent, William Cosgrave, in 1933. But his promise to end the economic war with Britain failed to win him the election.

The Blueshirt Challenge

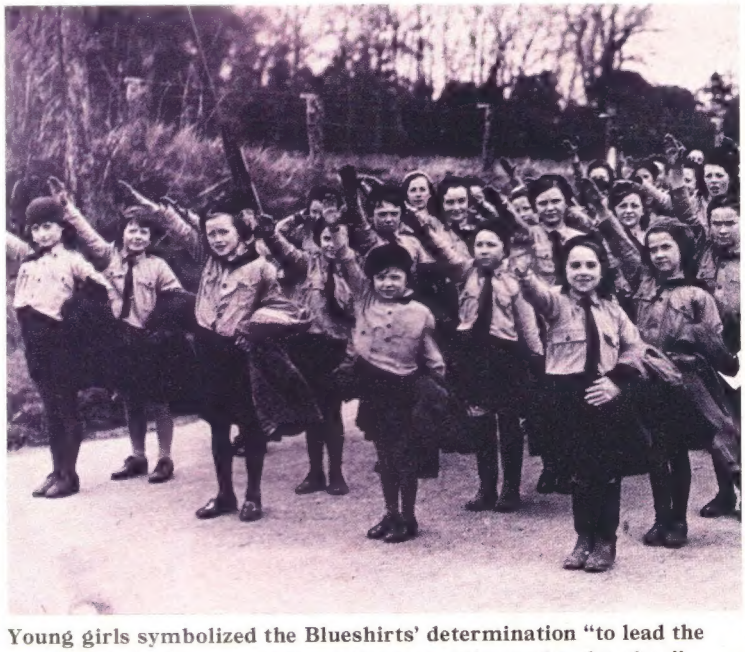
In the summer of 1933, only a few months after winning an over-all majority at the polls, Eamon de Valera decided to crack down on a new right-wing challenge to Irish democracy: the Blueshirts. The movement derived its name from the uniform adopted by members of the Army Comrades' Association in April, 1933.

Made up of veterans of the Free State Army, most of whom had fought against the republican followers of de Valera in the civil war of 1922–23, the A.C.A. acquired new significance in July, 1933, when it chose as its leader the flamboyant and ambitious General Eoin O'Duffy. O'Duffy had served as Police Commissioner since 1922, during which time he had made his name as a staunch supporter of the Anglo-Irish Treaty. A believer in police power independent of government control, he had no scruples about quarrelling with his political superiors in public. Under pressure from republican newspapers and his own Fianna Fáil backbenchers, de Valera dismissed O'Duffy in February, 1933. In July O'Duffy took over the leadership of the A.C.A., changed its name to the more emotive National Guard and gave it a new constitution. Although the Blueshirts called themselves "a steadying, moderate body" of men, the constitution's call for a form of corporate state and its appeal for an awakened spirit of "discipline, zeal and patriotic realism" carried sinister and disturbing undertones of totalitarianism.

Blueshirt leader Eoin O'Duffy in 1934.

The Blueshirts, like the Fascist movements on the Continent, exploited the Communist bogey and fed on the frustrations of the economic depression. Their main support came from farmers who had suffered the effects of de Valera's trade war with Britain and from men who believed that de Valera had released I.R.A. prisoners in order to wage a war of retribution against anti-republicans and suppress free speech. At its peak, the National Guard claimed a membership of 120,000, which did nothing to calm the government's fears. In August it banned a Blueshirt parade through Dublin, fearing that O'Duffy might try to emulate Mussolini's March on Rome and armed police patrolled the capital to prevent any attempt at a *coup*. The march was called off and on August 21 the Blueshirts were banned. A month later, however, the National Guard and two other anti-republican organizations merged, under O'Duffy's leadership, to launch a new political party called Fine Gael (United Ireland). But O'Duffy was no politician. Within a year the party had split over his appeal to farmers not to pay debts owed to the government and his reckless declaration, incomprehensible from an anti-republican, that the Blueshirts were ready to go to war for Ulster. The parliamentary party of Fine Gael kicked him out, the National Guard went into eclipse and Ireland's brief but dramatic experience of uniformed marchers and Fascist salutes was over.

Parading Blueshirts give the Fascist salute. O'Duffy claimed that drill was merely to promote "good health, character and discipline."



Young girls symbolized the Blueshirts' determination "to lead the youth of Ireland in a movement of constructive national action."

thus reaffirming Dublin's refusal to regard the partition of Ireland as permanent.

Before the election de Valera had also pledged his party to end the payment of land annuities to Britain, debts incurred when the British Treasury loaned money to Irish tenant farmers to buy land. In 1932 he had the annuities frozen in Dublin and the British government retaliated by excluding Ireland from imperial trading preference. However much it may have fulfilled de Valera's desire to look to countries other than Britain as trading partners, the economic war was costly to Ireland, while the effects on Britain were negligible. This new conflict ended only in 1938 under an agreement which settled the land debt on terms favourable to Eire and provided for the cession by Britain of her right to the use of certain ports and naval facilities under the 1921 Treaty. But by the outbreak of the Second World War, Irish politics and Anglo-Irish relations were still dominated by the other unresolved problems thrown up by the Treaty. And these were having a profound effect north as well as south of the border.

In December, 1922, the Northern Ireland parliament had exercised its option to be excluded from the jurisdiction of the Irish Free State. But this did not end the conflict between Catholic and Protestant: it simply placed the conflict within the more limited boundaries of the six northern counties. Nevertheless, it would be misleading to regard the Northern Ireland problem as solely the problem of Northern Ireland. For the province did not exist in a political vacuum, isolated from southern Ireland and Great Britain. If that had been the case, there might have been no crisis today, or at least the crisis might have been less acute. Partition created two embattled communities: northern Catholics saw themselves as a minority in Ulster, but as part of a majority in the whole of Ireland, of which Ulster was a part; Northern Protestants were outnumbered by Catholics in the whole of Ireland, but were the majority in Ulster and they belonged also to the "British" majority in the United Kingdom, of which Ulster was a part. Thus, both communities were simultaneously a "majority" and a "minority" and it was the hopes and fears inspired by this peculiar duality that made the problem so deep, bitter and intractable.

Moreover, the Catholic "minority" in Northern Ireland was a substantial one, amounting to about one-third of the total population, and they were bitterly resentful of a settlement that cut them off from their co-religionists in the south. Unlike the tiny Protestant minority in the Irish Free State, which could never hope to reverse the decision of 1921, the Catholics in the north represented a potential threat to the settlement and were regarded by their Protestant neighbours as a kind of "fifth column" in league with the besieging Catholics in the south. Thus, although they were in a local majority, the Ulster Protestants lived in constant fear that the gates would one day be opened to the enemy outside the citadel. Such a situation was a prescription for sectarian strife. Indeed, the first bloody battles were being fought out in the north while the guerrilla war against the British was still raging in the south. The violence directed at northern Catholics in the summer of 1920 had degenerated by the close of that year into a full-scale war between the Ulster Volunteers and their supporters in the Ulster Special Constabulary on the one hand, and the I.R.A. and the Catholic community at large on the other. It has been estimated that between June, 1920, and June, 1922, 1,766 persons were wounded and 428 killed. Over 8,000 Catholics were driven from their jobs and some 23,000 were forced to leave their homes.

It is against this background of old animosities and continuing fears that Catholic and Protestant attitudes must be seen. The fear of the Catholic "fifth column" explains (if it does not excuse) the harshness with which Ulster Unionist leaders treated the Catholic minority and explains the "siege mentality" of Ulster Protestants. It was this attitude that prompted Sir Basil Brooke (later Lord Brookeborough), a member of the government and future Prime Minister of Northern Ireland, to urge Protestants in 1934 "not to employ Roman Catholics, 99 per cent of whom are disloyal." The Catholics, ever mindful of the onslaught they had suffered in the 1920s and with their hopes firmly fixed on abolition of the border, drew in upon themselves to await the day of their reunion with the south.

Their hopes were fed by incessant anti-partition propaganda from the government in Dublin, but so, too, were Protestant fears, thus increasing the difficulty of achieving a united Ireland. De Valera's 1937 constitution swelled Protestant apprehensions by asserting that "The national territory consists of the whole island of Ireland, its islands and the territorial seas," and recognizing "the special position of the Holy Catholic Apostolic and Roman Church as the guardian of the Faith professed by the great majority of the citizens." The first President elected under the 1937 constitution in the south was, however, a Protestant, Douglas Hyde. A vicious spiral began. Dublin's refusal to abandon its irredentist line caused Ulster Unionists to tighten their grip in the north; Unionist pressure on northern Catholics, manifested by the abolition of proportional representation for local government elections in 1922 and parliamentary elections in 1929, gave fresh impetus to Dublin's campaign against partition. This further increased Protestant intransigence and caused the whole spiral to start again. The situation was made worse by the deterioration of Anglo-Irish relations in the 1930s and a second and even more vicious spiral began: sectarian tension in the north led to tension between Britain and Ireland, since the Westminster Parliament was ultimately responsible for Ulster; and bad relations between Britain and Ireland increased tension in the north, which, in turn, spilled over again into Anglo-Irish relations.

When the British government partitioned Ireland in 1920 it merely recognized the existing fragmentations in Irish society. But it also expressed the hope that the two parts of Ireland would eventually come together and it provided for a body through which they could cooperate on matters of mutual interest and perhaps settle their political differences. This consultative body was the Council of Ireland, which might first have discussed economic matters and then moved on to more serious business. No British government after 1921 wished to keep Ireland divided against her will, but

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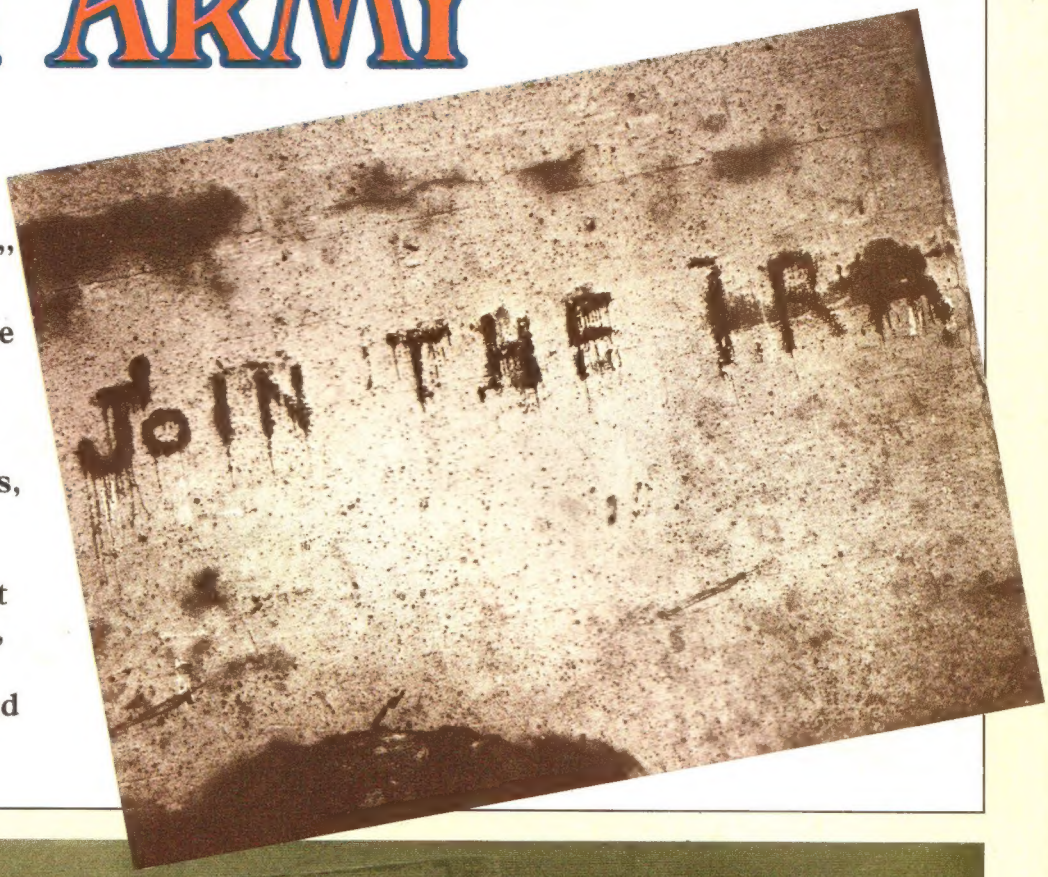
SECRET ARMY

"We have declared for an Irish Republic," Liam Lynch, I.R.A. Chief-of-Staff, said in 1922, "and will not live under any other law." Born out of the guerrilla war against the British in 1919–21, the I.R.A. denounced as traitors those who accepted the partition settlement of December, 1921. Outlawed by de Valera in the 1930s, it continued to recruit members (right) and pledged itself to "liberate" Ulster. Before the start of its present campaign in Ulster, two main offensives mark its history: bomb outrages in England in 1939 and raids across the northern border in 1956–62.



Six bombs gutted this London bank and injured 32 people when, early in 1939, the I.R.A. took the war against partition into England.

The Territorial Army Headquarters in Enniskillen, half-destroyed by a mine in 1956, was an early target of I.R.A. border raids.

Detectives examine Hammersmith Bridge after an I.R.A. attempt to blow it up in March, 1939. Two bombs shattered a girder and iron railings.

Rubble lies in a Coventry street in August, 1939, following a bomb blast that killed five.

Nelson has disappeared from his column Dublin, victim of an I.R.A. bomb attack made in March, 1966, just a few weeks be the 50th anniversary of the Easter Rising

the Council was anathema to Ulster Protestants, symbolizing the thing they hated and feared above all others, and it was quickly jettisoned by the northern government. The fact that Northern Ireland was an integral part of the United Kingdom, while southern Ireland was gradually severing its links with Britain, also meant that the two parts of Ireland grew to have less and less in common with each other. The north's economy was closely tied to that of Britain; de Valera's policy was to weaken the south's economic ties with Britain.

The Second World War increased the sense of separation. The north played a vital part in the British war effort, but the south, though it provided many recruits for the British forces, remained neutral and the naval facilities handed back to Eire in 1938 were denied to British ships. Two events between 1945 and 1950 had a further crucial impact on relations between north and south. One was the result of decisions taken at Westminster; the other was the result of decisions taken in Dublin. In July, 1945, the British electorate returned for the first time a Labour government with an effective working majority. This government, led by Clement Attlee, was pledged to establish a comprehensive national health and insurance scheme in Britain and Ulster's leaders demanded that the benefits should apply to their people, too. Northern Ireland's claim was morally as well as constitutionally sound: she had participated in the war, her naval facilities had been made available to British and Allied shipping, troops had been stationed on her soil and Belfast had suffered severe damage from German bombers. Her citizens, therefore, could hardly be denied benefits which were being granted to those of England, Wales and Scotland. The introduction of welfare services into Northern Ireland during the period of the Labour government began a process which enabled the north to outstrip the south in living standards. Ulster was still by no means prosperous, unemployment remaining at around 7 per cent, but she was a good deal better off than Eire and this was a fact that made northern Protestants regard reunion with even less relish than usual.

To these economic and social barriers to reunion there was added in 1949 a new ideological barrier. In the previous year a change of government had at last occurred in Eire when a coalition of opposition parties ousted de Valera from power. This coalition, led by John Costello, contained very diverse elements, including hard-line republicans and near-Socialists, but it was dominated by the Fine Gael (United Ireland) Party, founded by those who had upheld the 1921 Treaty. It was a surprise, therefore, when Costello announced that legislation would be introduced to sever Eire's remaining links with the British Commonwealth and make Ireland a republic. The new government had, as it were, caught de Valera swimming and made off with his clothes. Why did it carry out this piece of spectacular political robbery? One reason was that those who had backed the Treaty, including Costello himself, had always been accused of "selling the pass" on the republic and they were eager to wipe the slate clean. They also hoped thereby to heal lingering divisions and to take the gun out of Irish politics. Leaving the Commonwealth was a way of uniting opinion in the south, but it was not the way to unite the whole of Ireland. And taking the gun out of southern politics

A slogan on a Dublin fence in the 1950s pinpoints one reason for resistance to a united Ireland in Ulster, where welfare payments are almost twice as large as those in the south.

meant its reintroduction into northern politics, for the gap between the two halves of the country was now wider than ever before.

In the north Protestant anxiety reached a new fever pitch and the Ulster Unionists held a snap general election to demonstrate to Dublin – and to Westminster – that "What we have we hold." It was, perhaps, fortunate for the Ulster Unionists that the south's decision to leave the Commonwealth came so soon after the war, at a time when British opinion was well disposed to Ulster for her part in the war effort and vexed with the Dublin government for "frolicking," as Winston Churchill put it, "with the German and later with the Japanese representatives to their heart's content." In 1949 the Attlee government passed the Ireland Act, which guaranteed that "in no event will Northern Ireland or any part thereof cease to be part of His Majesty's dominions and of the United Kingdom without the consent of the Parliament of Northern Ireland." This pledge satisfied Ulster Protestants, but diminished still further the hopes of Ulster Catholics for reunion with their brethren in the south.

By the early 1960s, however, sectarianism in Ulster seemed to be slackening. The turning-point appeared to be the complete failure of the I.R.A. to win Catholic support for its violent campaign against Ulster between 1956 and 1962. Despite its military defeat in both halves of Ireland in the 1920s, the organization had never been driven completely from the scene. It had simply gone to ground to wait until the time was ripe for another offensive. It judged that such a moment had come when Sinn Fein candidates polled a large Catholic vote in the British general election of May, 1955.

Its campaign took the familiar form of raids across the border, the blowing up of public installations and the destruction of customs posts. There was little reason to suppose that this campaign would have any more prospect of military success than previous ones. The real danger of the campaign was that it would inspire a Catholic insurrection in the north which would, in turn, trigger off a Protestant backlash and bring the Dublin and Westminster governments into heated and possibly even dangerous confrontation. This, however, did not happen. The I.R.A. received little aid or comfort from the Catholic population; Protestants did not take reprisals on the minority; and successive Dublin governments under Costello, de Valera (who regained power in 1957), and Sean Lemass (who ruled as de Valera's chosen successor from 1959 to 1966) made extensive use of the Offences Against the State Act to intern without trial I.R.A. members and their sympathizers. Lacking Catholic support in the north and under pressure from Dublin Westminster and Belfast, the I.R.A. was beaten into total and ignominious defeat.

THE ORANGE AND THE GREEN

lfast Protestants, decked with Orange
shes, carry a banner of King William III
their traditional 12th of July parade,
d to commemorate William's victory
er the Catholic forces of James II.

The flag of the Irish republic, which first made its appearance in 1848, has between its orange and green borders a white strip, symbol of peace. The symbol has proved singularly inapt: orange, dating from William of Orange's victory over James II at the Battle of the Boyne in 1690, and green, first used as the republican colour by Wolfe Tone's United Irishmen in the 1790s, are still the distinctive liveries of Protestants and Catholics on parade. These colours continue to reflect Ireland's passions and divisions – especially in Ulster – and, like the slogans that deface Belfast's walls, help to perpetuate the politics of hatred.

Green bunting flutters above Catholics setting off for a parade in Belfast. They carry an I.R.A. emblem and a banner of Wolfe Tone, hero of the nationalist rising of 1798.

Paintings on Belfast walls of William of Orange (above), the Protestant successor to Catholic James II, the Union Jack and Elizabeth II (below) help to remind Ulster Protestants of their loyalty to the Established Church and the Crown. They are also a reminder of the Catholic "enemy."

Over the republican tricolour on a Belfast wall is an exhortation to Catholics not to forget the savage repression of the United Irishmen's Rebellion of 1798, one of the time-honoured episodes in Irish nationalist folklore.

II. The Sectarian Fever Rises

The main reason for the Ulster Catholics' failure to support the I.R.A. was that they were finally gaining some real benefit from the British connection. The welfare state was having an effect and poorer sections of the population, Catholic as well as Protestant, were beginning to enjoy greater prosperity. Catholic loyalty could not be "bought" by welfare benefits and Catholics still retained pride in their nationalist and republican traditions, but they seemed increasingly prepared to forgo demands for reunification. Rising living standards, however, did nothing to alter their status as a politically frustrated minority. There was a growing impatience, particularly among younger Catholics, at what they saw as continuing Protestant discrimination against them in the allocation of jobs and council housing. A deeper cause of resentment was the goading realization that, as J.M. Andrews, a former Ulster Prime Minister put it, "A Unionist government must always be in power in Northern Ireland." It was these factors which produced an upsurge of Catholic criticism of the Unionist régime in the 1960s. This came, ironically, at a time when Northern Ireland was ruled by the most liberal Prime Minister in her short but turbulent history.

Captain Terence O'Neill, who assumed the premiership in 1963, was the fourth man to hold that office since the foundation of the state in 1920. His predecessor, Lord Brookeborough, had reigned for 20 years, the longest continuous record of any premier in the British Isles since Sir Robert Walpole in the 18th Century. But whereas Brookeborough had been content to preach Unionist orthodoxy, O'Neill attempted to remove the sectarian sting from Unionist rule. Roman Catholics were treated to the extraordinary sight of a Unionist Prime Minister visiting their schools and extending the hand of friendship to their co-religionists. In February, 1965 they were able to witness the even more amazing sight of O'Neill's meeting at Stormont with Sean Lemass, the Prime Minister of the Irish Republic, to discuss "possibilities of practical co-operation in economic matters of mutual interest." It was the first such meeting between the heads of the two governments since the two Irish states were founded.

Terence O'Neill, Prime Minister of Northern Ireland (right), greets his southern counterpart, Sean Lemass, in 1965, in the first such meeting since the two states were set up in 1921.

But O'Neill was faced with one great and ultimately insurmountable obstacle: if he went too far in conciliating the Catholics, he would alienate much Protestant opinion; if he did not go far enough, he would disappoint the Catholic hopes which he had raised. And lurking in the background, ready as always to exploit any rise in the sectarian temperature, were the sinister apostles of Republican and Unionist extremism. To anyone living in Northern Ireland during the early days of O'Neill's era, it was clear that the place was on the move at last – though the point of final destination was open to doubt. It was not too long before the first signposts appeared. The Ulster Volunteer Force in Belfast warned that all known I.R.A. men would be "executed mercilessly and without hesitation" and proceeded to shoot five Catholics, two of whom died. The murderers were caught and the U.V.F. was immediately declared an illegal organization.

Protestant extremism on the political front, however, presented a much more difficult problem. Its strident spokesman was the Reverend Ian Paisley, the dominating figure of the ultra-Protestant Free Presbyterian Church. Setting his stern face against "the forces of popery and the scarlet whore drunk on the blood of the churches," Paisley achieved dubious prominence when he went to Rome in 1966 to protest against the Archbishop of Canterbury's ecumenical visit to the Pope. He castigated the unfortunate Dr. Ramsay as "a Romanizer, an idolater and a blasphemer." Later that year Paisley led his supporters on a march through Belfast to where the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church was meeting. The avowed purpose of the march was to protest at the "Rome-ward trend" of the Presbyterian Church, but it went through a Catholic area of the city previously forbidden to Loyalist demonstrations and a brief though violent riot occurred. Undeterred, the marchers reached the Assembly building, where they subjected the Governor of Northern Ireland, Lord Erskine, and his wife to a torrent of abuse. As a result, Paisley was charged with unlawful assembly and sentenced to three months' imprisonment when he refused to be bound over to keep the peace for two years.

The Protestants were not the only people who felt that they were running the risk of a sell-out. When O'Neill met Lemass in 1965, the aim of both had been to improve relations between north and south. But to Catholics in the north, who for nearly 50 years had been encouraged by successive Dublin governments to look to the south for salvation and to give minimum co-operation to the Unionist government pending reunification, Lemass's visit seemed to imply an acceptance that partition was permanent. To North-

ern Ireland Catholics, the O'Neill-Lemass meeting meant, simply, that Dublin had abandoned them to their fate and they began, therefore, to look for new allies and new ways of making political change. In February, 1967, the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association (N.I.C.R.A.) was launched with the aim, not of re-unification, but of securing for all Northern Ireland's citizens those basic civil rights enjoyed by people elsewhere in the United Kingdom. Such a movement naturally struck a responsive chord among many sections of British liberal opinion and resulted in increasing publicity for Catholic grievances in the British Press and Parliament. A group of Westminster Labour M.P.s formed the Campaign for Democracy in Ulster, and early in 1968, at a meeting attended by Westminster M.P.s and anti-Unionist M.P.s from Stormont, N.I.C.R.A. decided to mount a more aggressive challenge.

In August 4,000 people supported the civil rights march from Coalisland to Dungannon to protest at the discriminatory allocation of housing. The march passed off peacefully, but it established a technique of protest that was soon to have the province in flames. Unwilling to accept that a movement concerned with Catholic grievances could be anything more than a republican "fifth column," many – perhaps most – Ulster Protestants believed this new challenge should be suppressed. It was met by force in the city of Londonderry on October 5, 1968. Defying a banning order by the Home Affairs Minister, Mr. William Craig, some 2,000 marchers, including several Stormont and Westminster M.P.s, set off from the Waterside station. They chose a different route into the city from the one previously announced, but soon found their way blocked by police. The result of the ensuing confrontation was 11 policemen and 77 civilians injured, including two Stormont Opposition M.P.s, Mr. Gerry Fitt and Mr. Eddy McAteer. The effect on Catholic opinion was profound and when a second civil rights march was held in Londonderry in November it attracted 15,000 supporters. Events in Northern Ireland were also, for the first time in almost 50 years, engaging the attention of the British government. Anti-partition propaganda had had little effect on Whitehall opinion, but the Prime Minister, Harold Wilson, and his colleagues were unable to ignore a popular non-sectarian movement pledged to the unexceptionable aim of full civil rights for all citizens of the six counties

Civil rights campaigners march through Armagh in November, 1968, to demand equal treatment in housing and "one man, one vote" in elections.

WAR ON THE STREETS

In the mid 1960s Ulster appeared capable of solving her problems peacefully. Prosperity was increasing, relations with the south were improving and the I.R.A. was unable to win Catholic support. But Prime Minister Terence O'Neill's attempts to break "the chains of ancient hatreds" were too drastic for Protestants and too moderate for Catholics. By 1969 sectarian passions were again simmering. At Londonderry in August they exploded, plunging Northern Ireland into the worst crisis of her grim history. Overwhelmed by prolonged and widespread violence, the police were unable to cope and British troops were ordered in.

British troop reinforcements fly into Ulster in 1969.

Children continue to play happily near a smouldering barricade erected in the Catholic Bogside area of Londonderry in April, 1969.

Violence Erupts-And the Troops Move in

On August 12, 1969, 15,000 Orangemen assembled in Londonderry to celebrate the city's defiance of James II in 1689. As they marched along the walls that enclose the old Protestant town and overlook the Catholic Bogside, they sang provocative songs and tossed pennies to the Catholics. The Bogsiders responded with missiles, and when police tried to enter the Bogside they were driven back by petrol bombs. Then, with all chance of peace lost, the Bogsiders hoisted republican tricolours and proclaimed their area "Free Derry." By August 14 the police had clearly lost control and the first British troops rumbled into the city.

But the contagion of violence had spread and that night Belfast endured its worst rioting for half a century. Five people, including a nine-year-old boy, died in the turmoil. On August 15, the British Home Secretary, James Callaghan, held a Press Conference. "Gentlemen," he announced, "the troops are going into Belfast."

A hooded Protestant sits in a van decked with the Union Jack as Catholic homes burn in Belfast on the night of August 14, 1969.

British troops, protected by riot shields, get an early taste of the ordeal that awaits them in the streets of Belfast.

Police form up by an armoured car, wrecked by petrol bombers during summer rioting in Belfast in 1969.

Apprehension and bewilderment cloud the faces of young and old alike as Catholic families make a hasty evacuation of their homes in Belfast in the wake of rioting.

Men in the Middle

When British troops moved into Belfast on August 15, 1969, they were welcomed by Catholics and resented by Protestants. "If only the bloody British Army hadn't come in," one Unionist politician complained, "We'd have shot ten thousand of them by dawn." But the troops soon incurred Catholic animosity as well. In July, 1970, a Catholic area of the city was subjected to an arms search and curfew and in the accompanying troubles, three civilians were shot dead and one was crushed and killed by a military vehicle. As a result, Catholic sympathy for the I.R.A. soared.

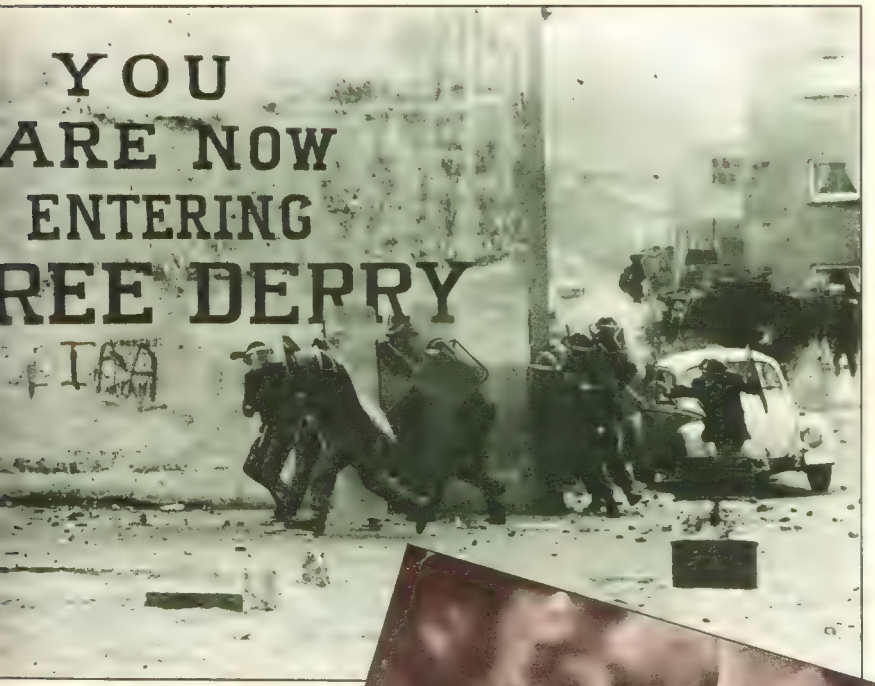
Thereafter, the British presence acted as an increasing irritant to many on both sides. The internment in August, 1971, of I.R.A. suspects without trial incensed Catholics. The imposition of direct rule from Westminster infuriated Protestants, many of whom joined the paramilitary body known as the Ulster Defence Association.

By the spring of 1972 three military groups were competing for support in Northern Ireland: the British Army (above left) and the masked militants of both communities – the Protestant Ulster Defence Association (above right) and the I.R.A. (below).

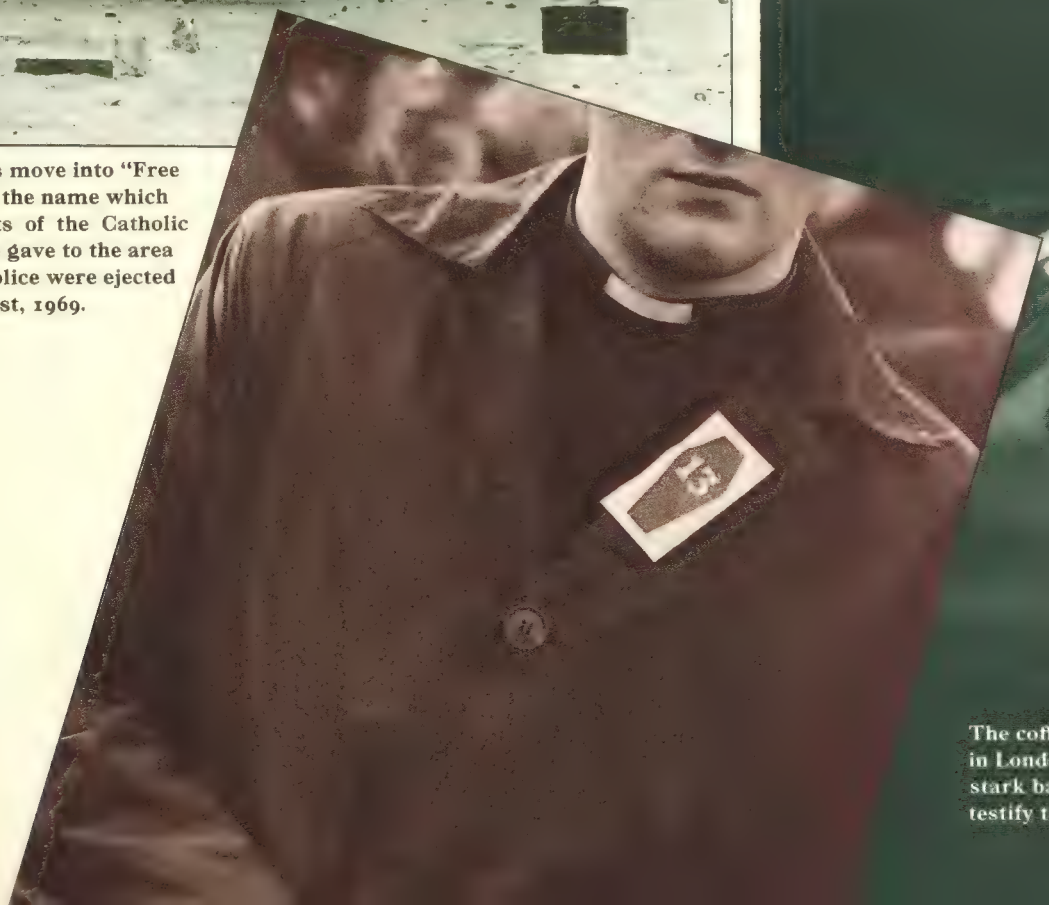
Bloody Sunday in Londonderry

On Sunday, January 30, 1972, 10,000 people defied a Stormont government ban to march through Londonderry in protest against the internment without trial of I.R.A. suspects. Standing watch were 200 heavily armed men of the Parachute Regiment. As paratroops charged into the crowd to make arrests, shooting broke out. When it was over, 13 civilians lay dead and many others were wounded. The date has entered into the calendar of Irish nationalism as "Bloody Sunday." The exact sequence of events was bitterly disputed. The Army claimed that their men had come under fire first and had shot back in self-defence; the marchers alleged that paratroops had fired without provocation.

An inquiry by Lord Widgery, the Lord Chief Justice, came up with conclusions which both sides were able to interpret as they wished. Widgery found that the troops had been fired on first, but that "none of the deceased or wounded is proved to have been shot whilst handling a firearm or bomb." The inevitable result of the grim confrontation confirmed Catholics in their belief that the British Army was simply continuing its traditional policy of brutal oppression in Ireland and its memory still poisons relations between troops and Catholics.



Soldiers move into "Free Derry," the name which residents of the Catholic Bogside gave to the area when police were ejected in August, 1969.



The coffins of the 13 civilians shot dead in Londonderry in January, 1972, and the stark badge on a novice priest's lapel (left) testify to Ireland's continuing tragedy.

III. The Westminster Government Steps In

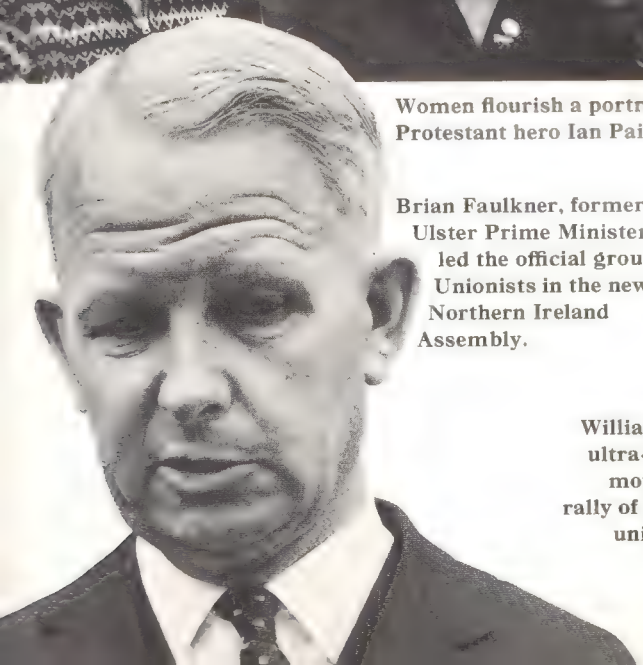
In November, 1968, Terence O'Neill went to London for talks with the British Prime Minister and a five-point reform package was announced: local councils would be urged to undertake the non-sectarian allocation of housing on a "points" system; an Ombudsman would be appointed to investigate complaints against the central government; a more democratic local government franchise would be introduced; a development commission would supplant the Londonderry borough council, which the Unionists had contrived to control, although the city had a majority of Catholic voters; those provisions of the Special Powers Act in conflict with the U.K.'s international obligations would be withdrawn "as soon as the Northern Ireland Government considered this could be done without undue hazard."

These reforms, however, alienated still further the Protestants without satisfying the aroused expectations of Catholics and street agitation and violence escalated during the coming weeks. In February, 1969, O'Neill attempted to rally moderate opinion and rout hard-line critics in his own party by holding a general election in the province. Supporters of O'Neill won a majority over those opposed to him, but his days as Premier were now numbered. On March 30 an Electricity Board sub-station near Belfast was blown up and in April explosions wrecked four more public utilities. There were no casualties, but the explosions, according to O'Neill himself, "quite literally blew me out of office." Although it was subsequently established that all these explosions were carried out by Protestant extremists, most Protestants believed the I.R.A. was responsible for a menacing new campaign of sabotage and O'Neill inevitably bore the blame for his "softness" towards dissident elements. On April 28 he resigned and was succeeded by his cousin, Major James Chichester-Clark, who had left the Cabinet only a few days before in protest at the timing of local government reform.

The new Prime Minister had been in office for a little over four months when the province was engulfed in its worst crisis since the 1920s. On August 12, 15,000 Orangemen gathered in Londonderry to celebrate the city's victory over its Catholic besiegers in 1689. Fighting began when missiles were thrown at the parading Orangemen. Within hours a full-scale battle had developed between the Royal Ulster Constabulary and the residents of the Catholic Bogside district. As the petrol bombs and canisters of C.S. gas continued to explode in Londonderry, rioting flared up in other towns and in Armagh one Catholic was killed and two injured when a platoon of B Specials – part-time policemen, wholly Protestant, and unsuited to riot control – opened fire on a hostile mob. Finally, on August 14, after urgent consultations between Stormont and Whitehall, British troops moved into Londonderry. Meanwhile, however, the situation was becoming even graver in Belfast. In a night of bitter fighting involving Catholics, Protestants, regular police and B Specials, firearms were extensively used and hundreds of houses were set alight. Fighting continued during August 15 and was halted only by the arrival of British troops in the evening. By then eight civilians, including a nine-year-old boy, had died, scores of civilians had been wounded by gunfire and hundreds of houses had been destroyed.

Four days later Chichester-Clark met Harold Wilson in London and a further reform package was agreed on – the so-

Women flourish a portrait of Protestant hero Ian Paisley.



Brian Faulkner, former Ulster Prime Minister, led the official group of Unionists in the new 1973 Northern Ireland Assembly.

William Craig, leader of the ultra-Protestant Vanguard movement, urged a mass rally of Loyalists in Belfast to unite against direct rule.

called Downing Street Declaration – aimed at reconciling the Catholic community to the Stormont régime. Like the previous reform package, however, this one still left Catholics as a minority without political power while at the same time resurrecting the bogey of a "sell-out" among Protestants. The latter showed their wrath in October, 1969, when it was announced that the police were to be disarmed and that the B Specials were to be disbanded and replaced by a militia to be known as the Ulster Defence Regiment and controlled from Whitehall. In a night of shooting between Belfast Protestants and security forces, one policeman and two civilians were killed and scores of people were injured. According to the Reverend Ian Paisley, the British Army behaved like the S.S. Similar allegations soon began to come from the Catholic community, which was particularly incensed by the imposition of a curfew in the Catholic Falls area of Belfast in July, 1970.

A renewed I.R.A. threat also emerged in 1970 with the formation of the "Provisional" wing of the movement. Since the dismal failure of its 1956–62 campaign, the I.R.A. had been dominated by a Marxist-inclined leadership in Dublin which believed in political agitation and non-violent protest rather than a shooting war with the British. The "Provisionals," who drew their strength from northern Catholics, rejected this "Official" line in favour of the old I.R.A. orthodoxy of bombing and shooting. When the Provisionals claimed to be "traditional republicans," they were speaking a language which Catholics in the north (and the south as well) could understand. There was no puzzling talk, such as came from the Officials, of burying religious quarrels and joining with working-class Protestants to establish a non-sectarian Socialist Utopia: it was a simple matter of "driving the British into the sea" and "freeing Ireland from foreign occupation."

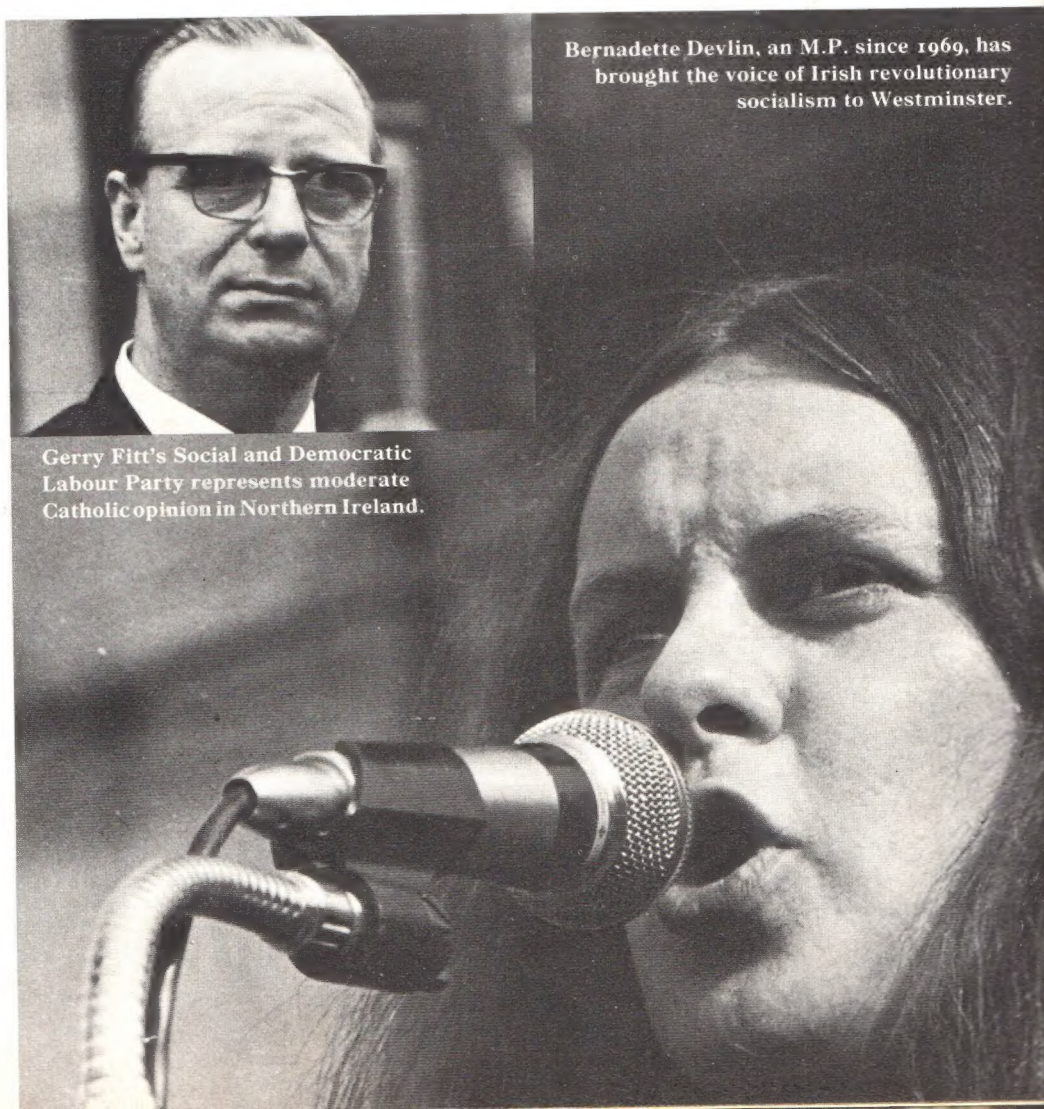
The Labour government in 1969 had produced a reform package rather than grasp the nettle of direct rule of Northern Ireland from Westminster; and the Conservative government which replaced it in June, 1970, followed the same line. But when the Provisional I.R.A. terrorist campaign began in earnest in 1971, the political and security situation again deteriorated and made the day of direct rule much more likely.

An early casualty of the Provisional gunmen was Major Chichester-Clark, who resigned the premiership in March, 1971, after failing to convince the British government of the necessity for more troops in Northern Ireland. His successor was Mr. Brian Faulkner, who had resigned from O'Neill's Cabinet because of the latter's decision to set up a commission of inquiry into disturbances in the province. But Faulkner had agreed to serve under Chichester-Clark.

Faulkner had a reputation for toughness towards the I.R.A., for as Northern Ireland Minister for Home Affairs, he had played a large part in defeating the terrorist campaign in the 1950s. The method he had used then was internment of I.R.A. suspects without trial. In August, 1971, he bowed to Protestant demands for more of the same medicine and again introduced internment without trial. It was the last card that Stormont could play against the I.R.A., and it turned out to be politically disastrous, however much it may have been militarily justified, for it completed the alienation of the Catholic community from the Stormont government.

Meanwhile, Dublin had been keeping an anxious eye on developments in the north. The flight of Catholic refugees into the Republic after the massive violence which racked Londonderry and Belfast in the summer of 1969 had opened old scars and the continuing warfare placed the Fianna Fáil government of Jack Lynch in an awkward predicament. He deplored the plight of Catholics in the north and sent Irish Army units parading around the border, but the I.R.A. demanded guns as well as sympathy and symbolic gestures. Some members of Lynch's Cabinet were even willing to help supply guns; Lynch, for his part, issued statements about the "need" to reunite Ireland and the "necessity" of ending partition. Such actions and pronouncements, however, simply increased Protestant fears of a Republican takeover and aggravated the turmoil in the north. The Dublin government's unwillingness to strike against the resurgent I.R.A. also gave the movement a secure operations base in the south and once again the vicious spiral began: the deteriorating situation in the north led to a worsening

Gerry Fitt's Social and Democratic Labour Party represents moderate Catholic opinion in Northern Ireland.



Bernadette Devlin, an M.P. since 1969, has brought the voice of Irish revolutionary socialism to Westminster.

William Whitelaw was appointed Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when Britain imposed direct rule on the province in 1972.

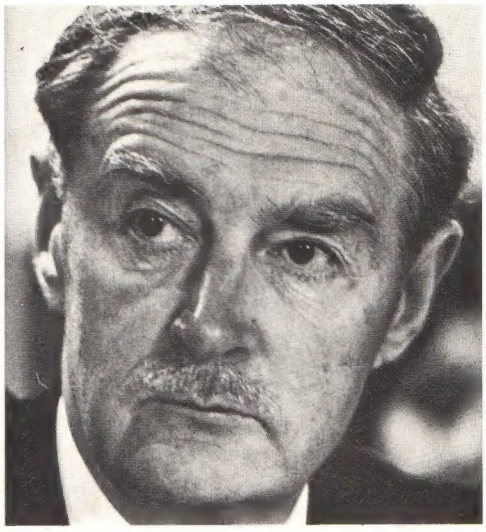
of Anglo-Irish relations; bad relations between London and Dublin further increased tension in the north, which, in turn, had repercussions on London and Dublin. Hostility between all parties to the dispute reached a new level of bitterness in January, 1972, when British troops killed 13 Catholics in Londonderry.

By now the Stormont government was being buffeted by many winds. A united and vociferous Catholic opposition party – the Social and Democratic Labour Party (S.D.L.P.) – had emerged under the leadership of Gerry Fitt, and William Craig, the former Home Affairs Minister, led the attack on the government by dissident Unionists and began to mutter darkly of a U.D.I. for Northern Ireland if any attempt was made to suspend its constitution. Some effective sniping was also mounted by Ian Paisley, who had been elected to the Stormont parliament as a "Protestant Unionist" at a by-election in April, 1970, and had won a seat in the Westminster Parliament in the June general election. Far worse for the Ulster government, however, was the fact that each new I.R.A. outrage increased the danger of a Protestant backlash, the effect of which would be to drive Catholics into closer co-operation with the terrorists.

With one-third of the population ranged against the Stormont government, British hopes of avoiding direct rule were also fast disappearing. Yet the dangers of direct rule were appallingly apparent. The long-feared Protestant backlash could well become a nightmare reality or the I.R.A., encouraged by the fall of Stormont, might redouble its efforts in an attempt to overthrow the rule of Westminster. In March, 1972, however, the British government took the plunge: the government and parliament at Stormont were suspended for a year and William Whitelaw was appointed to run the province's affairs. All shades of Unionist opinion denounced the move and a one-day protest strike met with an enormous response from Loyalist workers. The I.R.A. bombing campaign continued and a new para-military Protestant organization – the Ulster Defence Association – came into increasing prominence. But the widely predicted holocaust did not occur. One year later there were even grounds for cautious optimism. The large presence of the British Army in the north was curtailing I.R.A. violence and the replacement of Jack Lynch's Dublin government by a Fine Gael-Labour coalition led by Liam Cosgrave put the movement under real pressure in the south. The massive vote in favour of retaining the U.K. link in the border referendum arranged by the British government in March, 1973, also helped to dispel Protestant fears of a sell-out.

In June Ulster's voters were given the chance to pass their judgement at the elections held for a reformed and reorganized Northern Ireland Assembly. Under a new system of proportional representation, the electors returned three main groups: Official Unionists, led by Brian Faulkner, won 23 seats; hard-line Unionists, including the supporters of Ian Paisley and William Craig, won 27; and the predominantly Roman Catholic S.D.L.P. won 19. In addition, the non-sectarian Alliance Party and Northern Ireland Labour Party returned a group of nine members.

These results showed two things: the fragmentation of Protestant opinion and, more important, the rejection of the gunmen by all sections of the electorate. The people of Ulster made it clear that they believed in constitutional politics however much they differed about the kind of constitution they wanted. Some



Liam Cosgrave, leader of the government in Dublin, has expressed his desire for a peaceful settlement of the Irish problem.

in Britain had hoped for a more dramatic and clear-cut victory for the "moderates" – i.e. Alliance Party candidates. But they tended to forget that liberal parties on the British model do not flourish in conditions approaching civil war. The surprising thing about the elections, therefore, is not that they failed to produce more "moderates," but that they failed to produce more extremists. I.R.A. and U.D.A. "front" candidates were unable to win a single seat.

At the time of going to press the Unionist *bloc* led by Craig and Paisley was unwilling to help in governing the province while Stormont remained stripped of its old political autonomy and security powers. Hard bargaining was therefore necessary before the formation of a governing executive. A power-sharing agreement will certainly not "solve" Ulster's problems. Only the unlikely acquiescence of Protestants in a reunited Ireland or equally unlikely Catholic approval of partition could do that. But failure to agree on power sharing would be the signal to the watching and waiting gunmen on both sides. One is reminded of Arthur Griffith's agonized cry during the treaty debates in the Dail in January, 1922: "Is there to be no living Irish nation? Is the Irish nation to be the dead past or the prophetic future?" With over 800 dead in Ulster since 1969, that, perhaps, is the most important "Irish Question" of all.

For the Polo Season, 1912